

INDIVIDUALIZED PLAN FOR EMPLOYMENT

I. LEGAL AUTHORITY:

Workforce Investment Act (P.L. 105-200), Title IV, Section 102(b).

II. POLICY STATEMENT AND PURPOSE:

It is the policy of ORS to offer eligible individuals a choice in options for the development and content of a plan of action toward an employment outcome, an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), to assist her/him to achieve her/his vocational goal. The purpose of the IPE is to facilitate the achievement of an employment outcome by an eligible individual.

A. Definition

The Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) is that part of the case record which explicitly outlines the vocational goal and service plan for the individual. It serves as an agreement between the eligible individual with a disability, or as appropriate, that individual's parent, guardian, or other representative, and the VR counselor regarding mutual expectations in the rehabilitation process.

B. Conditions and Criteria

The Agency will, in a timely manner, assist each eligible individual who meets the Order of Selection (OOS) criteria (when ORS is under an OOS) to develop and implement an IPE. Implementation includes periodic review of individual plans and appropriate amendments as needed to support the achievement of the employment goal.

1. Initiation and Amendment of the Individualized Plan for Employment

The development of the IPE follows after certification of eligibility for services, order of selection category, and the required assessment of vocational rehabilitation needs. It is continuously developed in the sense that if substantive changes are needed (i.e., in the employment outcome, or in the type or provider of

services), it must be amended to reflect those changes.

2. The individual, or the individual's representative, may develop all or part of the IPE independently with assistance from a qualified rehabilitation counselor (A qualified rehabilitation counselor is required to possess a Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling or a Master's degree in a closely-related field. See Section 101.4.1. for a complete description of Qualified Rehabilitation Counselor.) or from another source selected by the individual.

3. Components of the IPE

ORS must provide information in writing or in appropriate modes of communication to individuals about the various options for developing an IPE, such as the availability of assistance from a qualified rehabilitation counselor and/or technical assistance from other sources.

The IPE:

- a. Must be developed on ORS forms;
- b. Explains relevant agency guidelines, conditions, and criteria for agency approval of the plan;
- c. Must be designed to achieve an employment outcome that is consistent with the individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice so that such individual may prepare for and engage in gainful employment;
- d. Identifies the employment outcome (vocational goal) and time frame for its achievement;
- e. Outlines the specific vocational rehabilitation services and the service provider(s) (when known) needed to achieve the goal; the projected time frames for the initiation and duration of each rehabilitation service and the expected funding source(s); and objective criteria for

measuring progress toward achievement of the goal;

- f. It contains, as appropriate, a statement of the projected need for post-employment services;
- g. Contains the views of the individual toward the goal, services, providers, methods to secure services, and the individual's involvement in making such choices;
- h. Is amended only with the individual's participation to reflect changes in goal, services, and/or service provider(s), and it reflects all services planned;
- I. Is prepared in light of relevant elements of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) when the individual is also eligible for special education services;
- j. When a supported employment outcome has been identified, it describes the time-limited on-going supports provided by ORS, as well as those extended services provided by other State, Federal, or private programs or the basis for determining that such continuing support is available;
- k. Must be reviewed by a qualified vocational rehabilitation counselor at least annually with the individual;
- l. Contains assurances that the individual was provided explanations, using appropriate modes of communication, regarding the following:
 - 1) The plan and the terms and conditions for the provision of services;
 - 2) The individual's rights and responsibilities;
 - 3) The appeal process and a description of the Client Assistance Program;

- 4) The extent of the individual's participation in the cost of services;
 - 5) The extent to which goods and services are provided in an integrated setting consistent with informed choice; and
 - 6) The extent to which comparable benefits and services are available.
- m. It assures that a copy of the plan and any amendments thereto were provided to the individual;
 - n. It includes the basis on which the individual has been determined to be rehabilitated;
 - o. When an individual has been found ineligible after the IPE has been initiated, the IPE is amended, and includes:
 - 1) A rationale for the ineligibility decision; and
 - 2) A notation regarding the individual's full participation in and views about the decision to close the case, including the individual's rights, remedies, including CAP assistance, and
 - p. When the basis of an ineligibility decision is a finding of inability to benefit from VR services leading to an employment outcome, procedures in Section 115.18 are followed.

III. PROCEDURES:

A. Development

- 1. The IPE will be completed as soon as possible, taking into consideration the needs of the individual, following certification of eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services.

The counselor is responsible for explaining the Employment Plan and its purpose to the individual in a way which is understandable to the individual. The individual's rights and responsibilities, the appeal process, and information about the Client Assistance Program

must also be explained to the individual in a manner which is understandable to the individual.

Once the individual understands and agrees with the concept of the IPE, etc., its contents can be negotiated.

2. The employment outcome and services should be based on, to the extent possible, information gathered for the eligibility and OOS decisions. Where additional information is needed, a comprehensive assessment of the individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests and needs, must be undertaken in the most integrated setting consistent with the individual's informed choice. The assessment should include results from aptitude testing, educational and vocational background, need for rehabilitation technology, as appropriate, and personal characteristics, such as ability to adapt to change, social functioning, and commitment to work.
4. A specific vocational goal should be identified as soon as possible, when possible. When it is not possible to be specific, the occupational grouping or "job family" will be acceptable.
3. The reduction or elimination of functional limitations associated with the individual's physical and/or mental impairments identified during assessment are natural objectives for inclusion on the IPE, and those objectives and the vocational services to accomplish this are outlined on the IPE.
5. The IPE for transitioning students must be completed before a student graduates from high school.
6. Once the specific services are identified, the individual and the counselor must agree on the approximate time frames for initiation and duration of the services, and who or what resource(s) will pay for the services.
7. When the need for post-employment services can be anticipated when the IPE is initially developed (i.e., rehabilitation technology consultation at employment site, work place adaptations) and, in

those cases, the post-employment services should be listed. The need for such services must be reassessed prior to case closure and an amendment developed as appropriate.

8. When counseling and guidance is the predominant service to be delivered, the IPE must outline the issues to be addressed, the periodic contacts and the evaluation criteria, and the case record must document attempts to resolve all the issues.
9. Prior to a qualified vocational rehabilitation counselor's signing of the IPE, the counselor shall consult with her or his immediate supervisor to review the plan and/or case record to insure that all planned services are appropriate and permissible within the policies and procedures of ORS. The plan shall not take effect until approved by a qualified vocational rehabilitation counselor.
10. The IPE is prepared in writing the first time when an action plan to achieve an employment outcome is developed, and, subsequently, when substantial changes to the plan are indicated. For those changes, an amended, new document will be developed. Examples of substantial changes are changes in vocational goals and services, including provision of a new primary services, or the elimination of a previously planned primary service. Every major change in the plan is made with the full knowledge and participation of the client; minor changes not requiring a plan amendment should be recorded in the narrative of the case record.
11. The IPE must also contain the individual's views, preferably handwritten, about her/his plan. If the individual is unable to sign her/his name, a representative may execute the individual's signature followed by the words, "by his parent", or "guardian", or "representative", and the name of that individual signing for the client. **THE COUNSELOR SHOULD NOT SIGN FOR NOR SERVE AS THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE INDIVIDUAL.** However, if the individual does not have a representative, cannot sign his/her name, or make an "X" or mark, the counsel or should attempt to have a witness

present and ask that witness to sign her or his own name and address.

B. Assessment of Progress

1. Monitoring progress toward the achievement of the goal is the joint responsibility of the ORS representative and the individual (or her/his representative), and is so noted on the IPE in the form of objective evaluation criteria for each service. The evaluation criteria must be clearly depicted and provide a consistent standard which includes a qualitative measure of progress, such as a grade point average, and a quantitative measure, such as a reasonable time limit by which an individual is expected to complete his/her services.
2. The IPE must be reviewed as often as necessary but at least annually with the individual (or her/his representative) to insure continued appropriateness. This annual review is a supplement to the periodic reviews which relate to the evaluation of the effectiveness of the services. A description of the annual review by a qualified rehabilitation counselor must be made in the case record.

C. CASE CLOSURE

- A. When the individual has achieved a successful employment outcome and her/his case is closed as rehabilitated, certain information about the individual's employment status must be recorded in the case file and on MIS. Assurances that outcome criteria are met must be noted on the IPE. Those outcome criteria are:
 1. That IPE services contributed to the achievement of employment;
 2. Employment is consistent with the individual's informed choice;
 3. Employment is in the most integrated setting consistent with the informed choice of the individual;

4. Employment has been maintained at least ninety (90) days; and
 5. At the end of ninety (90) days, the individual and the VR counselor agree the job is satisfactory and the individual is performing well.
- B. When a case is being closed after the development of the IPE because of a finding that the individual is no longer eligible, the counselor must consult with the individual about the decision and provide written notice of the reasoning, of appeal rights and procedures, and of available resources such as the Client Assistance Program and other service agencies and organizations.
- C. The finding of ineligibility must be certified as an amendment to the plan and such finding shall be based on the demonstration that the individual is not capable of achieving a vocational goal. Completion of the relevant section of the IPE Form satisfies this requirement. This recording shall indicate the nature of the involvement of the individual in the decision. When the individual has been involved, her/his views concerning the ineligibility decision shall be recorded in the amendment. In all cases, a certificate of ineligibility shall be executed.